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Psycherelic Rock

Ersatz Nostalgia for the Sixties and the Evocative Power of Sound in the Retro Rock Music of Tame Impala

by

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Abstract: Focusing on the psychedelic rock music of Australian group Tame Impala, this paper investigates how an experience of "ersatz nostalgia" (Appadurai, 1996) might be evoked through the phonographic staging of sound in contemporary retro rock music. Unlike a traditional nostalgia for one's own personal past, this music evidences a yearning for a past outside of lived experience. This effect of evoking nostalgic sentiment in new music relies in large part upon the use of particular sound elements that are identifiable by musicians and audiences as the sonic cultural markers of the 1960s and which appeal to the wider collective memory of that era.

Keywords: *retro, experience, memory, sound engineer / noise / sound anarchy, recording / editing / production, phonography / transphonography, intertextuality (musical), experimentation, feedback / effetcs*

Résumé : En se concentrant sur le rock psychédélique du groupe de rock australien Tame Impala, cet article s'intéresse à la façon dont une expérience de nostalgie de substitution (Appadurai, 1996) peut être suggérée par la mise en scène phonographique dans la musique rétro contemporaine. Là où la nostalgie traditionnelle concerne le passé effectif d'une personne, cette musique permet de concevoir une nostalgie s'attachant à un passé situé hors de l'expérience vécue. Cette possibilité d'évoquer le sentiment nostalgique au sein de la production musicale récente est en grande partie liée à l'utilisation d'éléments sonores identifiables par les musiciens et le public comme des marqueurs culturels des années 1960, déclenchant une vaste mémoire collective de cette période.

Mots-clés : *rétro – expérience – mémoire – ingénieur son / bruit / anarchie sonore – enregistrement / montage / production, phonographie / transphonographie – intertextualité (musicale) – expérimentation – Larsen / effets*

"It feels like we only go backwards."
(Tame Impala, 2012)

Although retro revivals are far from uncommon in popular music, a curious development in contemporary retro rock music which seeks to replicate the style and sound of the past is a corresponding development of nostalgic sentiment towards classic rock music, generally originating in the 1960s, which manifests itself in the present generation of musicians and audiences. Unlike traditional nostalgic predilection, say, for one's childhood, this current trend of reconstructing the past in rock music appears to be geared towards satisfying *ersatz nostalgia*—a yearning for a past that was never experienced and is only evidenced through cultural artefacts and socially constructed memory. Indeed, whereas artists commonly draw inspiration from what came before (such as the influence of American rhythm and blues music on British rock and roll in the 1960s), the imitation and evocation of the past in contemporary retro rock is a defining characteristic, resulting in a product that carries with it a sense of age. A key way in which to affect this sensation in new music is to evoke the past through sound choices which appeal to the collective memory of the past, a practice heard in the music of Australian band Tame Impala. In this paper I will investigate how sensations of nostalgia without recourse to lived experience might be evoked in contemporary retro rock music through examining the phonographic staging of sound in the psychedelic rock music of Tame Impala.

I will begin by introducing the notions which underpin this study – ersatz nostalgia and the concept of "sound"—and outline how they are interconnected through contemporary retro rock music. Next I will propose a model for evaluating how an experience of nostalgia might be evoked sonically in contemporary retro rock music through the technological replication and manipulation of the sound palette of a past era. Here I will introduce the elements of phonographic staging which I will then apply to the final part of this paper which comprises an investigation into how these elements are manipulated in the music of Tame Impala in order to demonstrate the interplay between phonographic staging of sound and their likely nostalgic associations.

Ersatz nostalgia and collective memory

Nostalgia is typically understood to be a feeling of wistful longing for an earlier time in one's life, and is thus drawn from earlier personal experience. In this way Davis (1979) has suggested that "the past which is the object of nostalgia must in some fashion be a personally experienced past rather than one drawn solely, for example, from chronicles, almanacs, history books, memorial tablets, or, for that matter, legend" (8). Increasingly however, the sentimental hallmarks of nostalgia, the longing for a time lost, the effacement of the present in favour of the perceived stability of the past, is demonstrated by those who have no experiential ties to the past time which is favoured. This nostalgic predilection, which adopts the form of

nostalgia but is devoid of experiential content, has been observed by Baker and Kennedy (1994) and Goulding (2002) under the guises of "simulated nostalgia" and "vicarious nostalgia" respectively. In both of these expositions of this nostalgic phenomenon it is acknowledged that it is possible to *create* the sensation of nostalgia without recourse to experience. Appadurai (1996) similarly notes that a range of merchandising and marketing strategies seek to inculcate nostalgia by implanting a sense of longing within consumers for things which they had never really missed because they had never had them in the first place. For example, gift-order catalogues in the United States that manufacture nostalgia for bygone lifestyles, landscapes and scenes appeal not so much to the sentiment of consumers who have genuinely lost these things, but rather, work to teach "consumers to miss things they have never lost" (Appadurai, 1996: 76-7). What this amounts to is a type of ready-made nostalgia that can be derived without the hard work of acquiring memories or experience from which to draw one's own nostalgia from. So "rather than expecting the consumer to supply memories while the merchandiser supplies the lubricant of nostalgia, now the viewer need only bring the faculty of nostalgia to an image that will supply the memory of a loss he or she has never suffered" (Appadurai, 1996: 78). This "nostalgia without lived experience or collective historical memory" has been coined "ersatz nostalgia" by Appadurai, and is interchangeably referred to as "armchair nostalgia" and "imagined nostalgia' (1996: 77-8).[1] Nostalgia has thus been transformed from the realm of vivid personal attachments to contrived temporal losses which can be so easily and predictably aroused without recourse to an experiential basis. In this regard Boym notes ersatz nostalgia, especially as promoted by the entertainment industry, "makes everything time-sensitive and exploits that temporal deficit by giving a cure that is also a poison" (Boym, 2001: 38).

In this sense, contemporary retro rock is a vehicle for this kind of nostalgic experience without experience, driven by the institutionalism of rock and roll and its connection to popular conceptions of the past. Although sharing some similarities with rock revivals in popular music from the late-1960s and beyond, I consider contemporary retro rock that focuses on 1960s and early 1970s rock music as distinct from these earlier forms of retro rock. The primary difference is that this kind of retro rock music arising from the early 2000s to the present characteristically features artists and audiences who are temporally removed by several generations from the 1960s and early-1970s.[2] So, unlike the fifties revival of early rock and roll music in the 1970s or the success of the *Happy Days* television show in the same era which were at least in part linked with nostalgic sentiment derived from lived childhood and adolescent experiences, contemporary retro rock appeals to a nostalgic sentiment in the current generation of listeners and performers where there is no lived experience to draw upon (Moore, 2010: 163). Nostalgia in contemporary retro rock thus relies upon an understanding of the past that appeals to *collective memory*, the remembrances "held in common by a consensus in a group or society, not just by those who may have first-hand experience of the events

memorised" (Wolfe et al., 1999: 271). And since the concept of the past in contemporary retro rock music is by necessity reliant upon highly mediated representations of our collective memory of the past, it is ultimately these mediated representations of the 1960s that are likely to evoke that collective memory. This is especially the case with relation to the dominant mythologies surrounding the popular music of the 1960s which help characterise the era as the "psychedelic sixties", a perception that is borne out "as a public memory shaped not only by the generation that was college-age back then but also by members of other living social groups, such as current college students (Wolfe *et al*., 1999: 260). As Wolfe, Miller and O'Donnell demonstrate in their study into the enduring popularity of Cream's "Sunshine of Your Love", this iconic psychedelic rock recording evidences a "lasting capacity to trigger … a shared experience of the collective memory of that time in members of younger social groups" (1992: 272-3). Similarly then, contemporary retro rock music which draws on iconic recordings and "the signs that constitute the public memory of that time," utilises an analogous capacity to trigger similar appeals to collective memory which form the unlived experience of ersatz nostalgia (Wolfe *et al*., 1999: 260).

The evocative power of sound through phonographic staging

This capacity of contemporary retro rock to appeal to collective memory is further complemented by advances in technology that have made it easier to mimic the recordings of the past. Indeed, what distinguishes contemporary retro rock in the last decade from retro rock trends in the past is the concurrent rise of online digital media databases such as iTunes and YouTube which have not only indelibly altered the music industry model of production and consumption, but have made available for the first time in history a virtually limitless archive of popular music available for viewing and download (Reynolds, 2011: 58; 122). Also in the last decade, the increasing affordability of and proficiency in ever more sophisticated recording technology has made easily available to any recording enthusiast a veritable library of sounds and modules with which to replicate virtually any period production. The coupling of these two advances in popular history archivalism and recording technology has meant that contemporary retro rock music is now able to resemble the musical sources of its inspiration with far greater accuracy than in earlier retro rock styles. In fact, characteristic of the most successfully ersatz nostalgic contemporary retro rock is an attention to detail which closely mimics the sound and feel of the past.

Contemporary retro rock music is thus typically made sense of through framing its ability to evoke the past and connect with artists of an earlier period. While this can be achieved through such facets music composition, sleeve design, marketing and other paratextual media, a key factor, and what forms the focus of this paper, is the *sound* of the music. Distinct from the compositional element of music (the selection of musical notes which are structured and arranged in a particular sequence), the sound of the music covers the tonal, textural and timbral elements of music which are

arrived at through the natural tone of an instrument, the manner of performance of the compositional structure and the manner of staging the performance phonographically.[3] Indeed, apart from the musical composition, perhaps the single most identifiable aesthetic feature of contemporary retro rock music is the pronounced sense of age derived from the sound of the music itself. While retro rock typically relies on the compositional aspect of the original music it mimics, the success of contemporary retro rock in producing a sensation of nostalgia can be heightened by sonically emulating the past style as well.[4]

As such, I will be drawing examples from the recordings of Australian retro rock band, Tame Impala. This band is particularly exemplary of contemporary retro rock for their ability to evoke 1960s psychedelic rock akin to artists Cream and The Jimi Hendrix Experience. But more than merely playing the same type of music, Tame Impala's recordings *sound* as though they were from that era. Their music is a wash of reverberated vocal effects and vintage fuzz toned guitars reminiscent of psychedelic rock recordings from the 1960s. Following in the footsteps of other Australian retro rock bands from the 2000s such as The Vines, Jet and Wolfmother, Tame Impala have already in their short career gained global critical acclaim and commercial success. They have toured extensively locally and overseas, and have released two highly successful albums, *Innerspeaker* (2010) and *Lonerism* (2012), the recordings from which I will be looking at in the upcoming analysis. Similar to the frame in which retro rock music has been presented in recent years, critical responses to their music are grounded in nostalgic sentiment and praise for their ability to evoke canonical rock artists. For Gavin Haynes of the *NME* for example, the music is firmly situated amongst "the days when men were men, women were girl-groups, and life revolved around expanding your dome via the classic power-trio psychedelic blues rock acts like Cream and the Jimi Hendrix Experience" (2010). However, as is the brand of nostalgia evidenced by contemporary retro rock music, the framing is truly one of ersatz nostalgia where only the formal shell of nostalgia exists, hollowed of experiential memories and filled with music evocative of the past. In reviewing Tame Impala's album, a young music journalist has poignantly observed the absurdity at the heart of this familiarity:

> "We're constantly being reminded that if you can remember the '60s you weren't there, and this applies most incisively to people born in the 1980s and beyond. Not only do we remember—we can't forget." (Prescott, 2010)

In analysing the connection between the sound of Tame Impala's recordings and their ability to evoke nostalgia I will utilise the categories of sound found in the phonographic staging model (Moylan, 2002; Lacasse, 2005). The idea of "staging" sound implies elements of performance and production that *enhance* sound. For example, Lacasse (2000) considers vocal staging as "any deliberate practice whose aim is to enhance a vocal sound, alter its timbre, or present it in a given spatial and/or temporal configuration with the help of any mechanical or electrical process, presumably in order to produce some effect on potential or actual listeners" (4). Phonographic staging then is the

deliberate practice of enhancing recorded sound to achieve a desired effect. In the context of recording and producing music, all performed sound that contributes to a finished recording is ultimately staged in the sense that it undergoes at least some level of processing from its original physical actuality to its digital or analogue transference to a recorded medium. Some sounds undergo very little adjustment, while other sound elements are heavily treated and manipulated to create a desired effect. Lacasse thus employs the concept of staging to help demonstrate the evocative power of particular sounds and that the marriage of certain sound choices in a recorded piece of music are likely to affect the listener's perception of that piece of music.[5]

Originally derived from Moylan (2002) and later adapted by Lacasse (2005), the phonographic staging model utilises four main categories of sound perception—loudness, space, time and timbre. The parameter of loudness considers both the intensity of the performance, such as the variance in intensity with which a drummer strikes a cymbal or the difference between a shout and a whisper, as well as the dynamic volume of a sound element within the recorded mix. The feeling of space in a sound recording is usually generated along the stereo spectrum from left to right, but may also be derived from volume and timbral adjustments to a sound which makes a sound appear distant or otherwise suggest an environment in which the sound is being made. The time category covers a variety of popular sound effects and editing techniques that take place during the temporal evolution of a recording like delay or the overdubbing or overlap of sound. Timbre is the tonal quality of a sound which helps distinguish one sound, or instrument, from another. Apart from the natural timbre of particular instruments, this category considers timbral alterations such as equalisation and phasing which adjust the frequencies of a recorded sound.

While these categories are useful in helping to distinguish the various sounds in a piece of recorded music, it is not always the case that these elements are heard in isolation. Lacasse makes the point that these various elements are often intertwined during the course of a recorded piece of music, which makes their individual effect difficult to ascertain—especially when multiple effects are used simultaneously (2005: 2). The practical purpose of these categories is to provide a system of differentiation to allow us to identify the various sound elements heard in any given recording, which will in turn allow for a determination of their evocative potential. The aim of phonographic staging then, "rather than describing the ways in which different sound effects are *produced* in the studio," is "to account for these effects mostly from the point of view of the listener: how do these effects alter the ways in which we *perceive* recorded sound sources" (2005: 2). And in line with Lacasse's conclusion that "it seems quite clear that vocal staging can, along with other music parameters, orientate the listening process, potentially giving rise to a number of extramusical significations," the phonographic staging of contemporary retro rock recordings can likewise signify the markers of our collective memory of the past and

thereby render the unexperienced memory found in ersatz nostalgia (2000: 234).

Sounding the past in the music of Tame Impala

The recorded music of Tame Impala exhibits a range of sound manipulations that touch on all four of the main categories of sound perception, working together to form an accumulative impression over a body of work. As such, rather than investigate a single recorded track where one or two sound types might feature prominently, I will identify the various sound manipulations as they occur with respect to the phonographic staging of different sound sources (guitars, vocals and drums), referencing their use in a number of recordings, mostly from Tame Impala's first album, *Innerspeaker* (2010). This will afford the opportunity to highlight particular instances where an effect may be featured more prominently (such as with the multitude of guitar and vocal effects which can vary more drastically across a number of recordings), as well as characterise the overall sound of a particular instruments across the body of recordings (such as the drum sound which varies only slightly between recordings).

The phonographic staging of Tame Impala's rock music is largely characterised by an approach to sound which emphasises the tropes of 1960s psychedelic rock music, named for its association with psychedelic drug use—LSD in particular. Psychedelic rock conveys "a musical equivalent of hallucinogenic experience" by effecting disorienting musical sensations such as blurriness, overlap and time dilatation across the different types of sound perceptions of loudness, space, time and timbre, which seek to mirror the irregular physical and mental sensations of psychedelic drug use (Whiteley, 1990: 38). This is particularly effective in the music of Tame Impala since so many different types of sound manipulations occur so frequently (and often simultaneously) over the majority of their recordings—creating a sensory overload itself reminiscent of psychedelic experience as represented in 1960s psychedelic rock music. Among the instruments heard in Tame Impala's recordings which tend to feature the greatest amount of sound manipulation towards these psychedelic effects are vocals and electric guitars.

The phonographic staging of the vocals in the music of Tame Impala is most often affected through the perceptions of space and time via reverb and delay effects. These effects work to alter the time relay of the original sound source, resulting in the elongation and repetition of a sound. Reverb and echo in particular have a spatial component in that they attempt to recreate the effect of sound occurring in an enclosed space where sound continues to resound even after the original sound has finished sounding, such as in an echo chamber, or a bathroom, while the delay effect is largely a time based effect with a more defined duplication of a sound, repeated at a slight time delay from the original sound. Although these effects have been used widely in the recording and performance of rock music since their invention, they are particularly characteristic of psychedelic music. Since "virtually all psyche-

delia in popular music experiments with time", delay and reverb effects find a useful home within the music of Tame Impala as they help signal a hallmark of the "psychedelic sixties' experience (Reising, 2009: 526). The recordings "Alter Ego" and "Expectation" both feature vocals which utilise the effects of reverb and delay simultaneously, where the artificial repetition, expansion and elongation of vocal phrases have a curious effect on how the listener experiences time. Whereas music is experienced through the linear structure of time, moving from one sound event (such as a note or chord) to the next over a period of time, the heavy use of delay creates a sensation of repetition that blurs the fixity of the present, and the continuity of a performance from past to future. In the vocal breakdown in "Expectation", for example, syllables of lyrics already sung continue from their original utterance and replay over into the next lyric or syllable—a pattern that is repeated for as long as it takes the delay effect to decay to silence. It is this sensation of overlap and the breaking down of time boundaries which is said to simulate the effect of psychedelic drugs in altering the perception of time and duration. Reising (2009) notes that among other sensory effects, psychedelics can produce what is called "time dilation"—the sense that time has expanded or contracted, blurred into the past or the future, or even stopped entirely—and that psychedelic rock music can be particularly evocative of this experience. The use of reverb expands the effect of delay by widening the sonic image of the vocals—that is, extending the length of vocal phrases and adding a sense of space or roominess. In "It's Not Meant To Be", the use of reverb is a hallmark of the phonographic staging of the vocals. However towards the end of the song where double-tracked vocals singing the lyrics *He didn't have a hope in hell/Now I'll never see him* are heard, the combination of the reverb and double-tracked vocals evoke a sense of the vocal manipulation heard in classic psychedelic music like that created by artificial double-tracking (ADT) and other experiments with recording technology that were used so prominently in the late 1960s and early 1970s.[6]

Reverb and delay are also used in the phonographic staging of guitars in the recordings of Tame Impala, but I would like to address two other important types of effects that feature heavily in the perception of the guitars—fuzz distortion and modulation effects. Guitar sounds affected by distortion feature a boost in volume accompanied by a dirty, bleary and muffled sound, altering the timbral quality of the electric guitar from smooth-sounding to a rougher sonic texture. Tame Impala prominently utilise a distortion type which is closely linked to Jimi Hendrix and psychedelic rock music of the 1960s—fuzz distortion (Whiteley, 1992: 121-3). Fuzz creates an abrasive and even chaotic sound, said to "easily evoke anger and aggression" as heard in 1960s garage music, and which quickly became a signifier of the "psychedelic experience" (Johnson & Stax, 2006: 416, 419). These connotations are technically derived from the manner in which the fuzz effect adds complex harmonic overtones (the distinct frequencies heard in a resonant sound vibration) to a signal, creating a fuller and more complex sound by incorporating and enhancing the inherent har-

monic (and even dissonant) subtleties of the guitar sound. The fuzz guitar tone features prominently on "Desire Be, Desire Go" where two guitars that feature the thickened fuzz distortion sound can be heard—particularly on the verse riff, as well on the tracks "The Bold Arrow of Time" and "Lucidity". The perception of these guitar sounds, altered as they are by fuzz distortion, work not only to reinforce the sonic metaphors of hallucinogenic experience, but are also likely to trigger associations with the guitar sounds found in psychedelic rock recordings representative of the "psychedelic sixties".

The other important sound manipulation in the phonographic staging of electric guitars in Tame Impala's music is modulation. Modulation effects typically alter some or all of the sound properties of volume, timing and timbre. There are quite a number of different sounds and effects that can be achieved through modulation, such as vibrato, phase shifting and flange, and it is these effects which Tame Impala use to help musically represent hallucinogenic sensations. The vibrato effect for example can mimic the naturally occurring small variations in pitch made by musicians when holding onto a single note for an extended period. However by grossly increasing the depth of pitch variation, this effect can be exaggerated to the point where a sound signal is altogether overwhelmed by the wavering sensation, as is heard on the rhythmic guitar accents in the bridge section of "Music To Walk Home By" and especially throughout "Be Above It". As a general rule, the more heavy-handedly the modulation effect is applied, the less likely an instrument will be characterised by the acoustic properties which help listeners identify what the instrument is. Modulation thus further emphasises the psychedelic allegories of sound where seemingly normal elements are imbued with a greater power, depth and meaning. This is demonstrated by the use of phase shifting in "Solitude Is Bliss". The song's main guitar riff, which appears prominently in the intro and chorus, is treated with the modulation effect of phase shifting. This effect is the result of the combined sound of two identical recordings that would go in and out of time with each other such that certain frequencies would be progressively be cancelled and reintroduced, affecting a sweeping rise and fall in the frequency spectrum (Cunningham, 1998: 115). This creates a sense of movement in the guitar which shifts back and forth between varying degrees of fullness and depth, transforming the guitar into a spatial entity even though it is not moving along the stereo spectrum, elevating the stature of the guitar sound to ethereal heights through which a sense of sonic disorientation is evoked.

Modulation effects are also able to channel our collective memory of the "psychedelic sixties" by evoking innovative studio technology of the 1960s which are heard on a number of classic psychedelic rock recordings. The flange and phase shifting effects are for example comparable to the experimental studio techniques of tape flanging and ADT which categorises some of the canonical psychedelic rock recordings of the 1960s including The Beatles' "Lucy in the Sky With Diamonds", Small Faces' "Itchycoo Park" and Jimi Hendrix's "Bold As Love". The flange sound

on these recordings creates a "swooshing" sound which results from two identical signals falling in and out of sync with each other, similar to the sound of a speeding rocket or jet plane passing overhead (Bode, 1984: 734). The coda for Tame Impala's "Expectation' is a prominent example of flange, where a guitar which is heavily saturated by this effect repetitively plays out for nearly 90 seconds—repeatedly striking home an evocation ad infinitum of psychedelic interludes akin to those heard in "Itchycoo Park".

A similar effect to flanging could also be achieved through ADT, an innovation specifically formulated for The Beatles by their engineer Ken Townsend in order to avoid having to manually double track vocals (Julien, 1999: 361). Whereas manual double-tracking is the process of rerecording the same musical phrase in order to thicken the overall sound, ADT expands and widens a sound image almost as if it had been performed twice simultaneously. However because the sound is in slight phase with a copy of itself, the end result sounds more artificial. By widening the phase of the second performance, panning it to one side of the stereo spectrum or even wildly oscillating its speed, an automatically double-tracked sound can take on a number of otherworldly spatial and timing characteristics similar to modern day phase shifting. Through the phonographic staging of these similar sounds in Tame Impala's recordings, they are able to not only replicate the psychedelic tropes of these iconic 1960s recordings, but utilise sound elements which characterise the studio technology of that era. Such experimentations with phase shifting on the guitars in "It's Not Meant To Be' and "Why Won't You Make Up Your Mind?", combined with recurrent stereo panning from left to right, demonstrate the evocative potential of these sounds in two ways. They express both the similarly thickened spatial sensation of ADT prevalent in psychedelic rock music, as well as trigger associations in the collective memory of the recording innovations attributed to psychedelic rock music of the 1960s.

Another way in which the phonographic staging of Tame Impala's recordings helps orientate the listening process towards evoking collective memory of the 1960s is through sonically rendering the "warmth" of analog tape. Simply put, the processes of analog and digital recording capture sound differently and result in different sound products. Analog sound is characterised as "warm" because of the soft distortion generated by recording to tape, while digitally recorded sound captures sounds without a distortion effect inherent in the process (Barlindhaug, 2007: 78). The manner in which the drums in particular are phonographically staged in Tame Impala's music contributes to the sonic sensation of warmth associated with 1960s music. This is achieved through the transformation of the timbre of the drums through distortion. The level of distortion can vary from recording to recording, however the distortion effect typically sounds more pronounced the louder the drums are played or dynamically positioned in the mix, resulting in a lo-fi effect where the drums lose some of their tonal resonance in favour of a clipped and harsher sound. This drum sound is characteristic to most

Tame Impala recordings; however the "The Bold Arrow of Time" demonstrates the effectiveness of this drum sound especially when coupled with the characteristically warm overtones of fuzz distortion heard frequently on the guitars. Curiously, while this distortion effect gives the drums a warmer sound which signals 1960s style production, the sound of the drums overall are quite distinct from the drum sound typically heard in 1960s rock music. They sound louder and deeper in Tame Impala's recordings and lack the same muffled presence and sense of space in the mix associated with 1960s style production—suggesting that they do in fact have more in common with contemporary production and mixing styles. This plays out curiously with regard to the manner in which the evocation of analog recording helps to position Tame Impala's music within a pre-existing sympathy towards analog production. Although these recordings utilise the benefits associated with digital recording, Barlindhaug notes that it was "the soft distorted and compact sound of analog recording" of "the sixties and seventies" that had defined how a recording should sound," and while "today most musicians and music producers […] use digital recording," they still "prefer the sound of analog recording technology" (2007, 78). This extramusical signification of analog warmth associated with music recording history, when coupled with other sonic appeals to collective memory found in Tame Impala's music, acts to strengthen the evocative potential of sound already prevalent in the music.

Conclusion

In the above analysis of the sounds heard in the music of Tame Impala, I have endeavoured to elucidate the manner in which phonographic staging may play an important role in the interpretive perception of recorded sounds in contemporary retro rock music. By utilising psychedelic music tropes and their relation to hallucinogens, through referencing the sound of particular artists and recording techniques of the era, as well as, in the instance of replicating analog warmth through drum distortion, tap into existing nostalgic tendencies in sound production, there is a great deal of scope within these musical texts to orient the listening process towards a reading that draws on associations with our collective memory of the 1960s.

However, while this article has focused exclusively on the evocative potential of sound in retro rock, the power of this potential raises a number of questions regarding the wider implications of this line of research—not only in retro rock music, but in other popular music genres, and even in popular culture more generally. How do young audiences actually read and interpret these kinds of sounds and associated music processes, and what impact might they have in shaping our understanding of the past, and perhaps even more pertinently, the present? I hope therefore that this preliminary investigation into contemporary retro rock music and its scope to manipulate sound in order to appeal to extramusical significations sparks further study into this compelling phenomenon of *ersatz nostalgia*, the stuff of memory unlived.

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Discography

Tame Impala (2010), *Innerspeaker*, Modular.

Tame Impala (2012), *Lonerism*, Modular.

Notes

1. For the sake of simplicity I will adopt Appadurai's terminology of "ersatz nostalgia" in this article.
2. This is not to suggest that contemporary retro rock is the first or indeed the only ersatz nostalgia revival in popular music or even in rock and roll. Other examples include 1970s rockabilly and 1980s swing revivals.
3. For further discussion on the notion of sound in music culture see Théberge (1997).
4. There are generally two ways in which to approach this task of capturing the sound of the past, and many different artists, groups and producers who favour different techniques—from strict adherence to recording technology and techniques available to a certain time period, to utilising the gamut of modern recording technologies and digital plug-ins, to a mixture of both. For the purposes of this paper, however, I will not be concerned with specific technical practices of emulating the past sonically, insomuch as I seek to identify the potential evocative power of particular sounds to appeal to collective memory and evoke the sensation of nostalgia in contemporary retro rock music.
5. Lacasse is careful to note that the evocative power of a particular sound for a particular emotion will not always necessarily be aroused universally in all listeners, but rather that the sound has the *potential* for that evocative power which is likely to resonate in many listeners—a reservation that I also acknowledge in the current circumstances.
6. I will further consider the use of affecting automatic double-tracking below.